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*RI Department of Education  
in Collaboration with the  
RI Department of Health*

# **Personal Safety, Depression and Attempted Suicide Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students 1997 and 2001**

This summary presents selected information on behaviors related to personal safety, depression and attempted suicide that affect health risks among Rhode Island adolescents, based on results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in over 50 participating states, territories, and municipalities nationwide. The YRBS was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 and 2001 the YRBS was administered to 1,528 and 1,396 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students, respectively, in grades 9 through 12. With response rates of 60% in 1997 and 63% in 2001, the results are representative of all public high school students statewide. Survey findings from both years can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors within this population.

***For additional information contact Donald Perry, Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-7628 or Linda Nightingale Greenwood, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2364.***

## ***KEY FINDINGS***

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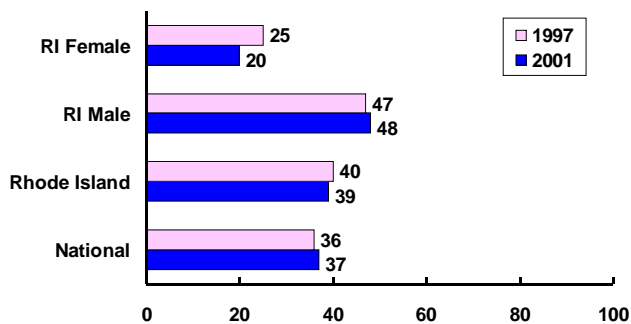
- ✓ In 2001, 39% of Rhode Island students who rode a motorcycle during the previous 12 months never or rarely wore a helmet, a figure similar to the 40% reported in 1997. Males were much less likely than females to wear a helmet (48% reporting that they never or rarely wore one versus 20%, respectively). There was little regular use of bicycle helmets by either males or females, with 85% of Rhode Island students reporting that they never or rarely wore a helmet when riding a bike in 2001. National figures for motorcycle and bicycle helmet use were similar to the Rhode Island percentages for both 1997 and 2001.
  - ✓ 18% of Rhode Island students in 2001 never or rarely wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else. This was a significant improvement over 1997 when the percentage was 33%, although males are still much less likely to wear a seatbelt than females. In the 30 days prior to the 2001 survey, nearly a third of teens rode in a vehicle which was driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol, and 16% of students drove after they had been drinking. There was little change in these rates compared with 1997. Males were more likely than females to have driven after drinking, with a rate of 22% as compared to 9% in 2001. In both time periods, Rhode Island 12<sup>th</sup> graders had notably higher rates of driving associated with drinking compared to all students statewide.
  - ✓ In 2001, 31% of female students in Rhode Island reported that during the past 12 months they had felt so sad and hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities. This was notably higher than the 21% of males reporting the same occurrence.
  - ✓ 17% of students in Rhode Island seriously considered suicide in 2001, a noticeable decline from the 24% reported in 1997. 12% made a plan about how they would attempt suicide, and 8% reported actually attempting suicide. In both 1997 and 2001, the percentages were markedly higher among females than males in all of these areas. 4% of Rhode Island students had to seek medical help as a result of an attempted suicide in 2001, which is comparable to the national figure as well as 1997 statewide data.
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## Unintentional Injuries- Vehicle Related Behaviors

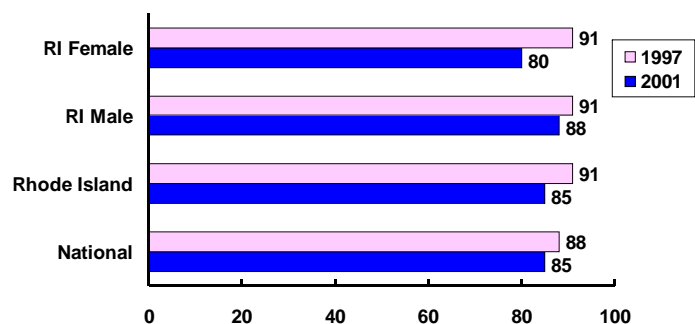
**Risk Behavior:** Lack of helmet use

**Rationale:** Head injury is the leading cause of death in motorcycle and bicycle crashes nationally. Unhelmeted motorcyclists are more likely to incur a fatal head injury and three times more likely to incur a nonfatal head injury than helmeted riders. Bicycle helmets might prevent approximately 56% of bicycle related deaths. Proper use of bicycle helmets can eliminate 65%-88% of bicycle related brain injuries and 65% of serious injuries to the upper and middle regions of the face.

**Percentage of students who rode a motorcycle during the past 12 months and never or rarely wore a motorcycle helmet**



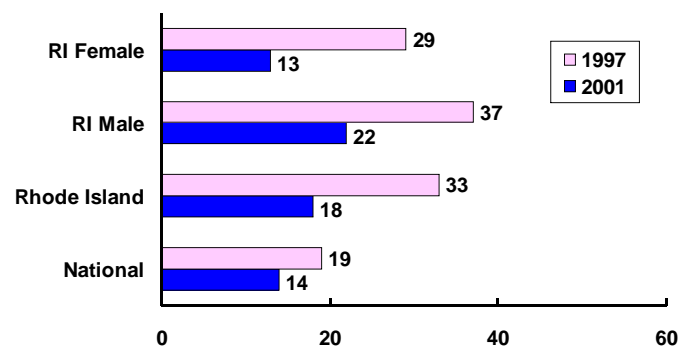
**Percentage of students who rode a bicycle during the past 12 months and never or rarely wore a bicycle helmet**



**Risk Behavior:** Lack of motor vehicle seat belt use

**Rationale:** Proper use of lap and shoulder belts could prevent approximately 60% of deaths to motor vehicle occupants in the United States. Motor vehicle related injuries kill more young adults aged 15-19 years than any other single cause nationally.

**Percentage of students who never or rarely wear a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else**

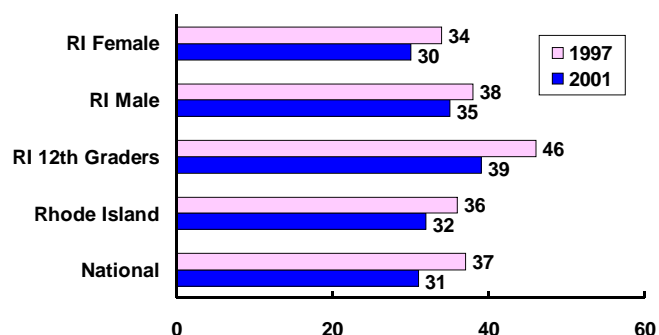


## Unintentional Injuries- Vehicle Related Behaviors

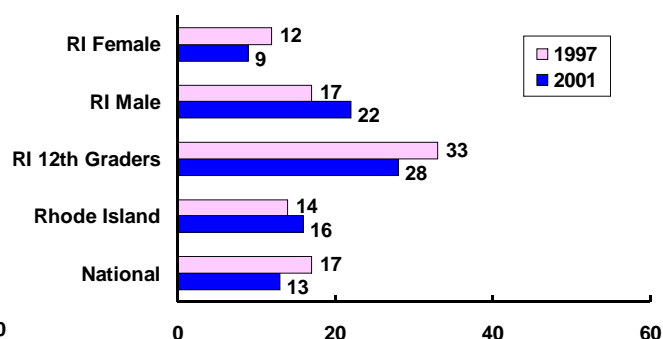
**Risk Behavior:** Alcohol use and driving

**Rationale:** In the United States, approximately 30% of all motor vehicle crashes that result in injury involve alcohol. Alcohol use is associated with 36% of motor vehicle related fatalities among those aged 15-20 years old and 20% of fatalities among those less than 15 years old.

**Percentage of students who during the past 30 days rode one or more times in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol**



**Percentage of students who during the past 30 days drove a car or other vehicle one or more times when they had been drinking alcohol**

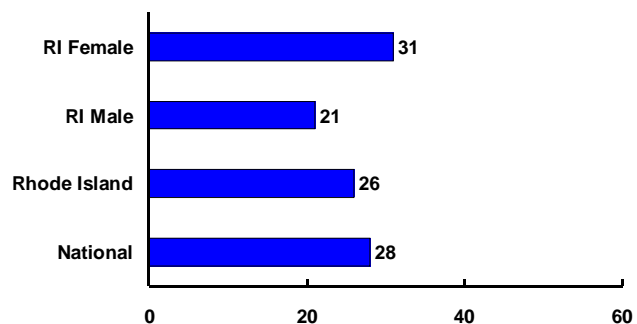


## Intentional Injuries- Depression and Suicide Related Behaviors

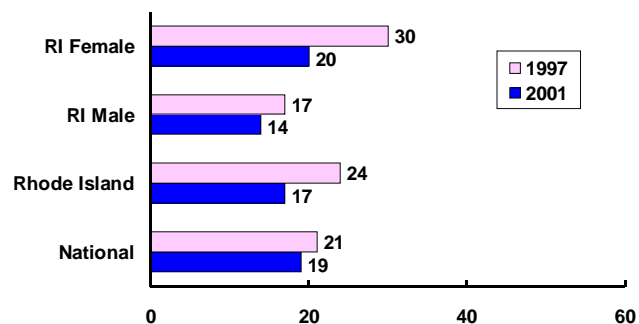
**Risk Behavior:** Suicidal thoughts and attempts

**Rationale:** Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth aged 15-19 nationally. The suicide rate for persons aged 15-19 was 8.2 per 100,000 in 1999, down from a high of 11.0 per 100,000 in 1994.

**Percentage of students who during the past 12 months ever felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities 2001 YRBS**

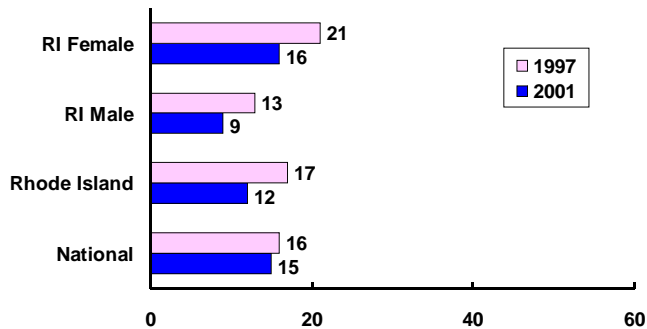


**Percentage of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months**

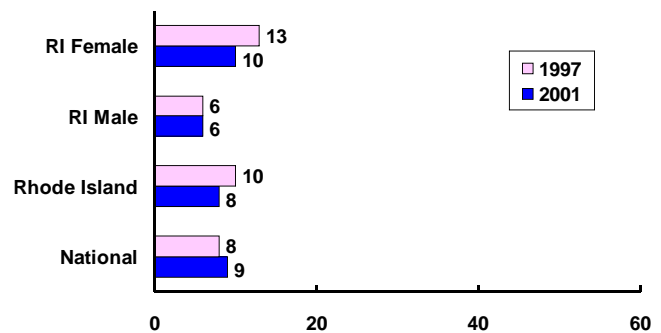


## Intentional Injuries- Depression and Suicide Related Behaviors

Percentage of students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months



Percentage of students who actually attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months



Percentage of students whose attempted suicide during the past 12 months resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or a nurse

